

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1533

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

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AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, IS

SUBJECT: ISRAELI PRESS: RABIN AND PERES BURY THE HATCHET -
FOR A WHILE

REF:TEL AVIV 3366

1. SUMMARY: ISRAELI PRESS MAY 19 GIVES PROMINENT COVERAGE TO REPORTS ON "RECONCILIATION MEETING" HELD MAY 18 BETWEEN PRIME MINISTER RABIN AND DEFMIN PERES FOLLOWING MAY 13 OUTBURST BY PERES AGAINST THE PRIME MINISTER (SEE REFTEL). COMMENTATORS SPECULATE THAT WHILE MAY 18 MEETING HAS NOT ENDED THE RIVALRY BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS, IT MAY ENABLE THEM TO WORK IN COOPERATION AND NOT ALLOW PERSONAL DIFFERENCES TO HINDER THEIR HANDLING OF "THE AFFAIRS OF STATE." PRESS REPORTS MAINTAIN THAT RABIN AND PERES NOW REGARD THE DISPUTE BETWEEN THEM AS OVER. WE ARE SKEPTICAL. END SUMMARY.

2. PRIME MINISTER RABIN AND DEFENSE MINISTER PERES MET MAY 18
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AT THE FORMER'S INITIATIVE TO TRY TO RESOLVE WHAT WAS

DESCRIBED BY MOST COMMENTATORS AS "AN INTOLERABLE STATE OF RELATIONS" BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS. PRESS REPORTS CHARACTERIZE THE MEETING AS FRANK AND DEALING WITH ALL THE TOPICS OF DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN RABIN AND PERES. DAVAR (BLOCH) WRITES THAT "CORRECT AND IMPROVED WORKING RELATIONS HAVE NOW BEEN CREATED BETWEEN RABIN AND PERES. THE QUESTION IS... HOW LONG WILL THE RENEWED UNDERSTANDING HOLD UP..?"

3. DAVAR EDITORIAL DESCRIBES MAY 18 MEETING AS A VICTORY FOR COMMONSENSE, OBSERVING THAT THE SOURCE OF TENSION BETWEEN PERES AND RABIN IS NOT TO BE FOUND IN DEEP CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO MEN. "WHEN NO SUCH DIFFERENCES EXIST...QUESTIONS RELATED TO PERSONA OR FACTIONAL RELATIONS SHOULD NOT HARM THE DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION BETWEEN LEADERS... IT CAN BE ASSUMED THAT THE MEETING HAS CREATED NOT JUST A PAUSE BUT A LONG-TER BASIS FOR COOPERATION...THIS IS CLEARLY INF THE INTEREST OF THE TWO LEADERS..."

4. MAARIV EDITORIAL DESCRIBES THE AGREEMENT BETWEEN PERES AND RABIN AS "AN INTERIM AGREEMENT." IT WRITES THAT "THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE DISPUTE - THE PERSONAL AND IDEOLOGICAL - REMAIN, AND THE ONLY THING ON WHICH THEY AGREE IS THAT THE COOPERATION ON THE GOVERNMENT LEVEL WILL CONTINUE... THE CONFRONTATION BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE DEFENSE MINISTER HAS BEEN POSTPONED WITHOUT KNOWING FOR HOW LONG.."

5. MEMBER OF HAARETZ STAFF HAS GIVEN US FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND ON MARCUS' MAY 12 ARTICLE (TEL AVIV 3329) WHICH PRECIPITATED LATEST ROUND OF TENSIONS: RABIN HAD GIVEN INTERVIEW ON BACKGROUND, MARCUS HAD SUBMITTED STORY TO RABIN'S OFFICE FOR APPROVAL, AND DG AMOS EIRAN HAD GIVEN THE GREEN LIGHT FOR ITS PUBLICATION. THIS IS SOMEWHAT REMINISCENT OF BACKGROUND TO RABIN'S "SEVEN LEAN YEARS" INTERVIEW OF DECEMBER 1974, WHICH HAD ALSO STARTED AS A BACKGROUNDER NOT FOR PUBLICATION GIVEN TO THE SAME JOURNALIST, AND ENDED UP AS A MAJOR POLICY STATEMENT. THIS TIME, INSTEAD, PUBLICATIONOF THE STORY BROUGHT TO THE SURFACE AGAIN THE DEEPLY-ENTRENCHED RABIN-PERES RIVALRY.

6. COMMENT: ONCE AGAIN, A CRISIS APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AVERTED. INDEED, IT REMAINS OUR JUDGMENT THAT NEITHER RABIN NOR PERES IS INTERESTED IN PRECIPITATING ONE. RABIN MAY HAVE HOPED TO CLIP PERES' WINGS THROUGH THESE INDIRECT ADMONITIONS BUT, IF THIS IS THE CASE,THE ATTEMPT CLEARLY BACKFIRED. THE TWO LEADERS HAVE AGREED ONCE AGAIN TO MAKE UP AND TODAY'S PAPERS SYMBOLICALLY SHOW THEM WARMLY SHAKING HANDS AT THE WEDDING OF RABIN'S SON. BUT GIVEN THE BUILT-IN POLITICAL RIVALRY, THE ACRIMONIOUS RECORD OF THE PAST, AND

THEIR DIFFERING POLITICAL/SECURITY CONCEPTIONS, TENSIONS ARE
CERTAIN TO SURFACE AGAIN. EMBASSY ASSESSMENT FOLLOWS SEPTTEL.
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